



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
WASHINGTON, DC 20350

IN REPLY REFER TO
OPNAVINST 9110.1B
OP-02
2 AUG 1984

OPNAV INSTRUCTION 9110.1B

From: Chief of Naval Operations

Subj: SUBMARINE TEST AND OPERATING DEPTHS; POLICY CONCERNING

1. Purpose. To implement the policy concerning submarine test and maximum operating depths, the conduct of test and deep dives by submarines and use of escorts. (A)

2. Cancellation. OPNAVINST C9110.1A. (D)

3. Definitions

a. Test Depth - The depth to the axis of the hull prescribed by the detail and special specifications for building the particular submarine, to which the ship is tested by actual submergence.

b. Collapse Depth - The depth at which it is calculated collapse of the hull will occur. The margin between test depth and collapse depth can be expected to decrease as the age of the submarine increases or if the submarine is subjected to unusual strain.

c. Maximum Operating Depth - The depth of the axis of the hull for a particular submarine which is authorized by the Fleet Commander in Chief (Submarine Force Commander) upon the recommendation of the Chief of Naval Material (Commander Naval Sea Systems Command), as the depth not to be exceeded in operations. This depth is normally the test depth, but may be reduced in specific cases. (R)

d. Specification of depths greater than 400 feet is classified confidential.

4. Discussion. The following factors are pertinent:

a. The fact that a submarine may on one occasion successfully submerge to a depth in excess of maximum operating depth without serious leaks or damage is not surety of its being able to submerge to the same depth without such leaks in the future.

b. The collapse depth and the corresponding factor of safety designed into submarines are not precisely known. The test depths which are prescribed for the various classes of submarines provide adequate margins of structural safety since the test depth for U.S. Submarines has traditionally been established at 2/3 of theoretical hull collapse depth, thus providing a safety factor of 1.5.

2 AUG 1984

c. The safety of a submarine operating at or near test depth involves many variables, among which are speed, angle, state of training and material condition of the ship. These and other pertinent factors should be taken into consideration in making depth excursions.

5. Policy. In view of the foregoing, the following policy in regard to deep submergence of submarines is effective:

a. The Chief of Naval Operations will prescribe the design test depth as a characteristic for all new submarine class designs. The maximum operating depth will usually be the design test depth. He will also prescribe a maximum operating depth as a variance from class design test depth for individual hulls of a submarine class upon the recommendation of the Chief of Naval Material (Commander, Naval Sea Systems Command) when a discrepancy in design or construction so dictates.

b. The Fleet Commander in Chief (Submarine Force Commander) may prescribe a maximum operating depth limit, less than test depth, when material conditions or other considerations so dictate. The Chief of Naval Operations and the Chief of Naval Material (Commander, Naval Sea Systems Command) will be kept informed of such deviations. (R)

c. Submarines will not intentionally exceed the authorized depth limitations. In hostile situations when the tactical situation necessitates, the submarine Commanding Officer may determine that the increased risks associated with exceeding maximum operating depth are outweighed by risks involved in remaining at or above the maximum operating depth limit.

In such a situation, depths in excess of maximum operating depth may be ordered but the degree of excursion beyond this depth must be held to the absolute minimum dictated by and consistent with the immediate tactical situation at hand. In making such a decision, all factors affecting hull strength, personnel reliability and reliability of depth control, propulsion power and recoverability must be considered. Excursions below test depth impose stress cycles which will shorten the fatigue life of the hull and all sea pressure systems.

d. All submarines are required to conduct a deep submergence test to test depth or authorized maximum operating depth before Combined Acceptance Trials, in the case of new construction, converted or reactivated submarines. A dive to test depth or authorized maximum operating depth will be made at intervals of not more than one year while in full commission. In

2 AUG 1984

addition, submarines in commission are required to conduct a similar test whenever they have undergone extensive work involving pressure hull openings or alterations which may materially affect their ability to withstand external pressure. The new construction, or post repair deep submergence test should be conducted in a water depth which is, as nearly as practicable, equal to the maximum operating depth desired and in the presence of an escort vessel equipped to communicate with the submarine. Reliable communications will be established prior to such test dives and maintained throughout the duration of the dive. If communications are lost, the test will be terminated until communications can be re-established.

e. In the case of submarines which have completed overhaul, conversion or reactivation, the deep submergence test need not be conducted during the overhaul, conversion or reactivation period if it is determined by the Force Commander that such deferral is desirable. In such cases trim and tightness dives shall be conducted during the overhaul, conversion or reactivation period, and the deep submergence test shall be conducted before the submarine commences unrestricted operations.

f. The Chief of Naval Material (Commander, Naval Sea Systems Command) will provide to the Fleet Commander in Chief: (R)

(1) Certification that the applicable Submarine Safety work package and necessary design reviews have been completed and that no outstanding limiting discrepancies exist, or provide a statement of any limiting discrepancies.

(2) A recommendation that the submarine be authorized unrestricted operations to design test depth or that a maximum operating depth be prescribed until limiting discrepancies are corrected.

(3) Duration of the recommended operating depth limitation or certification.

6. Escorts

(A)

a. An escort shall be provided during the initial deep dive submergence trials for all ships completing overhaul or new construction.

b. An escort shall be provided during deep dive submergence trials for ships completing an availability for repair of collision grounding damage where deformation is observed to be in the hull integrity envelope and/or supporting structure.

2 AUG 1984

c. The requirement for providing an escort during deep dive submergence trials upon completion of all other availabilities will be evaluated by Chief of Naval Material (Commander, Naval Sea Systems Command) on a case basis. Chief of Naval Material (Commander, Naval Sea Systems Command) will advise the Fleet Commander in Chief (Submarine Force Commander) in writing whether or not an escort will be required based on the scope of work in the availability. In general, SRA and ERP availabilities should not require an escort, since the work typically performed in these availabilities is limited in scope, is carefully controlled and, therefore, does not result in substantial risk of unidentified or incomplete work adversely affecting the SUBSAFE boundary.


(A)

7. Action. The Chief of Naval Material (Commander, Naval Sea Systems Command) and Fleet Commanders in Chief (Submarine Force Type Commanders).

a. Ensure compliance with the policy of paragraphs 5 and 6.

(A)

b. Cause instructions as deemed necessary to be promulgated, at the appropriate level, for amplification and implementation of the above policy.


J. R. THURMAN
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(SUBMARINE WARFARE)

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